

# Marketing and IT: Will the great divide continues in 2020?

 By Paula Sartini

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Business confidence across the country declined throughout 2019 on the back of the tough economic climate which is expected to continue in 2020. The need to win customers and gain their trust against increasing competition is a key challenge for most companies, as such, customer experience is growing in importance as a key differentiator for companies to attract and retain customers, particularly within a tough economy.



Paula Sartini, founder and CEO at BrandQuantum

To meet customer expectations, IT needs to be included in the marketing department's plans and aid in delivering the customer experience at every touchpoint along the customer journey. However, while there is much hype around the benefits of technology and marketing working together, there continues to be a great divide between these departments.

And yet when marketing and technology come together to achieve a common goal they can achieve great things and drive business success.

**Customer experience melds marketing and technology**

Customer experience has previously been the marketing department's responsibility, however, new technologies such as automation and artificial intelligence can transform the delivery of customer experience.

This creates the opportunity for the IT department and marketing department to work together to achieve a unified goal of delivering customer experiences that meet and exceed tech-savvy customer's expectations.

Both departments offer a diverse range of strengths to organisations. Marketing departments bring a creative and customer-focused approach, whilst IT provides both a technical and problem-solving perspective.

At the same time, marketing is often seen to want to adopt the latest technologies while IT is focused on governance, security and enterprise architecture.

Both of these are critical to the success of a company. As customers are starting to hold companies accountable for keeping their data secure, the role of IT and marketing need to align to meet customer expectations in terms of customer experience as well as in keeping their personal information secure from potential data breaches.

### **Surviving a recession with the help of technology**

The role of technology continues to grow in importance across organisations of all sizes. However, while companies recognise the benefits that technology can bring to various departments, the organisation and the customer experience, in many instances, adoption of these technologies has been slow.

Yet, technology is a critical component to helping companies to overcome several business challenges including helping companies to overcome the impact of a recession.

According to research findings published in *Harvard Business Review*, recessions can create performance gaps between companies, but investing in digital technology before a recession provides analytics and agile business practices to help companies better understand the threat they face and respond more quickly to market changes.

Based on the findings companies that invested in technology outperformed those that did not during a recession.

There are several factors attributed to the role technology plays in helping companies overcome the impact of a recession.

Firstly, technology provides access to data that gives companies the ability to make decisions to meet their customer's needs. The technology solutions also provide companies with the flexibility they need to adapt to the environment and respond to their customers with tailored solutions. Technology also aids in cost-cutting which helps the company to save money when it matters the most.

Many of these benefits can spill over into marketing departments, for example, giving marketers access to the right data enables them to make decisions to meet their customer's needs. They would also benefit from the flexibility that technology allows in adapting to the environment, helping them to develop or change campaigns according to the market.

However, in many instances, marketers have collected customer data for several years, but have not had access to the tools needed to extract and interpret this data. This is where marketing and IT should be working together more closely to improve marketing insights and close the loop on the customer experience.

### **Delivering the customer experience**

The customer experience is a key focus for the marketing department. However, marketers are unable to deliver customer experiences in isolation.

With tech-savvy customers, marketing departments are becoming more reliant on IT departments to develop technology solutions for customers to interact with the company at a time and on a platform that is convenient to them. This experience needs to align with the overall brand experience and requires insights from the marketing department to achieve this.

More broadly, marketers require the support of the entire organisation to meet customer expectations at every touchpoint across the customer journey. This means that the marketing department needs to implement technology solutions that help employees to deliver experiences aligned to the brand in every customer engagement.

According to a report from Forrester, businesses often deploy technologies that aren't aligned to their business strategies and do not understand how these technologies affect customer journeys. Ultimately, the consumer experience strategy should be central to technology purchasing decisions. The marketing department needs to implement solutions that will help employees across the organisation to deliver consistent brand experiences in every customer interaction.

This will remove pressure on the marketing department to play the role of brand police, give marketers peace of mind that the correct information is being sent to customers and empower employees to meet customer expectations in every interaction. However, marketers also stand to benefit from implementing automation technologies to streamline their functions and help improve efficiencies.

## Automating marketing functions

Marketers have a strategic role to play within organisations but are often chasing the next deadline or working on name tags and invitations for an upcoming event. These repetitive tasks can keep marketing departments bogged down in the finer detail and detract them focusing on the broader strategy of the department and the organisation.

In some instances, marketing departments have started implementing automation software that enables them to automate time-consuming repetitive tasks. By implementing these software marketing departments, which are usually made up of a small team of marketers, are freed up to focus on strategic elements of the business while delivering on the brand and marketing elements beautifully without investing a significant amount of time and effort on the delivery.

Marketers are already starting to recognise the value that automation software can bring to their department with the Digital Marketing Institute finding that 44% of marketing leaders believe that automation software will become more important in 2020.

While some strides have been made in terms of bridging the divide between the marketing and technology teams to meet customer's expectations and deliver consistent customer experiences, in most cases locally marketing and IT continue to work in silos.

However, globally technology and marketing departments are working together more closely and reaping the benefits of this relationship that has a direct impact of improving customer experiences and increasing company profits, helping them to adapt to a customer-centric environment and weather the storms of the tough economic climate.

## ABOUT PAULA SARTINI

With over 20 years' experience helping leading organisations overcome various business challenges, Paula understands the challenges that companies face in delivering a consistent brand experience and the impact this has on their bottom line. An analytical thinker that strives to solve business problems with innovative solutions, Paula believes that technology plays a major role in solving critical business and branding challenges. As such, she established BrandQuantum to help businesses overcome their branding challenges in the digital age.

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